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C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 000210

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/08/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [CG](#) [ELECTIONS](#)

SUBJECT: ABSENTEE CANDIDATE

Classified By: Ambassador Roger Meece. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

1. (SBU) President Joseph Kabila's political party, the PPRD, is winding up a general convention in Kinshasa (to be reported septel). The primary purpose of the gathering is to energize the party and nominate Joseph Kabila as the party's candidate in presidential elections expected in coming months. In a curious turn of events, however, Kabila left town on Monday February 6, the official opening day of the convention. He remains in Lubumbashi, and is expected to return to Kinshasa only after the convention winds up. As expected, the convention nominated Kabila by acclamation as the party candidate, albeit in absentia.

2. (C) Comment: Kabila's absence from his own nominating party reinforces the image of a political leader who is not enamored of the public practice of political skills. Kabila's absence may in part be related to his own preference to try to position himself above everyday politics. At least as significant, however, is that the party gathering has predictably been beset by internal fights, notably over the composition of candidate lists for the future national and provincial legislatures. Rather than get involved, in fairly typical fashion Kabila instead chose to go elsewhere, leaving others to fight out the issues. End comment.

MEECE